

Emergency Housing Voucher Program in King County, Washington Frequently Asked Questions / FAQ

The American Rescue Plan has allocated 1,314 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) to King County, distributed to three Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) - King County Housing Authority (KCHA), Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), and Renton Housing Authority (Renton HA). EHVs are similar to a "Section 8 Voucher" or a "Housing Choice Voucher" and specifically target people who are experiencing or in imminent risk of homelessness. EHV offer limited financial assistance for move in and housing navigation, and do not include any supportive services.

"How do I get a voucher?"

EHV will primarily be allocated to local homeless service provider organizations who will match this limited resource to people they are serving. If you are already connected to a homeless service provider please contact them for more information. Due to the severe need for low-income housing in our community these vouchers will not be matched to all who are eligible for them. **CEA Regional Access Points do not have the ability to issue vouchers.**

"I got a letter from a Public Housing Authority, it said I was approved for a voucher."

Notification letters from KCHA, SHA, and Renton HA went out to households on their waitlist informing them of the existence of this resource, **not approving them**. These letters do not guarantee a voucher nor will there be enough vouchers for all who qualify for them.

"I'm not currently homeless but I'm at risk of losing my housing. Can I get a voucher?"

If you are currently enrolled in Rapid ReHousing check with the program serving you to see if they received EHV for this purpose.

How many vouchers in total?

1,314 EHVs have been awarded to PHAs in King County:

- KCHA has 762
- SHA has 498
- Renton HA has 54

Who is eligible for an EHV?

Individuals or families who meet one of the four EHV eligibility categories listed below:

- People currently experiencing homelessness
- People fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking
- People who were recently housed and for whom providing rental assistance will prevent the individual or family's homelessness or having high risk of housing instability

Can an EHV be used by any population?

Yes, vouchers can be used by adults (18+), families (households with a child under 18), and young adults (18-24) for households who are experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness.

How long do EHVs last?

While EHVs are currently set to expire in 2030, EHVs should be considered a permanent housing resource. It is anticipated that other funding or resources will become available for persons housed with EHVs before the expiration date.

Can undocumented households apply?

At least one member of the household must be documented for residency status in order for the household to be issued a voucher. The eligible member of the household can be a minor (under 18 years of age). PHAs will prorate (reduce) the voucher assistance according to the proportion of documented participants in the household.

How will vouchers be distributed?

The King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) will designate homelessness service provider organizations to manage EHVs. These service providers will be allocated a number of vouchers to match to households they are currently serving. Coordinated Entry for All (CEA) will help manage this process in partnership with the KCRHA.

When do vouchers need to be leased?

HUD is actively reviewing use of these vouchers by PHAs and may re-capture vouchers from those that do not use them in a timely manner to re-distribute the vouchers to PHAs that have used them quickly. All EHV need to be issued as quickly as possible to avoid HUD redistributing them to another community. No EHV that have not been issued can be issued or re-issued after September 2023. Any EHV that are not yet issued by September 2023 will no longer be valid or usable for housing. People already housed with EHV at that time will continue to be assisted.

Do EHVs come with supportive services?

No. Supportive services were not included with these vouchers, so any supportive services needed to support the application and housing search and ongoing tenancy will need to be provided or leveraged. The Regional Homelessness Authority is working with the City and County to identify service funding that can be applied to support organizations to assist people with EHV.

Will there be additional services added to these vouchers?

System funders are working to increase and align resources to provide additional services for EHVs. However, service commitments are limited at this time

Will people need all their documents ready to apply?

Because this is an emergency program, the housing authorities will take the word of the applicant to certify some information that is needed to apply. This is called “self-certification” and will be available for initial participant identification, social security number (SSN), date of birth, and income at time of application, as well as owner certification for the initial housing quality inspection. Household members will need to supply documentation to support self-certification within six months of using their voucher.

Are there income thresholds or cutoffs that participants have to meet to qualify? How will income be verified?

KCRHA is prioritizing households under 30% AMI but will review applications on a case by case basis for households between 30-50% AMI. Income can be self-certified on the application.

What flags are PHAs using to disqualify participants during the criminal background check (CBC)?

PHAs are required to deny an application to:

- People subject to lifetime sex offender registration
 - People convicted of the production of methamphetamines in federally assisted housing, like Section 8 or Public Housing
- Please note, there are exceptions under the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) for survivors who were convicted if the conviction was due to abuse. For example, if the perpetrator was making meth and the survivor was charged by default, federal law exempts trafficking survivors from this penalty. VAWA-related appeals for denials should be made directly to the PHA.

The Housing Authorities will not deny applicants for other criminal justice histories that are revealed on a background check.

What else might disqualify an EHV applicant?

The PHAs may deny applicants with a history of violence or abuse toward PHA staff.

Can EHV be applied across King County?

Yes. If the vouchers are issued from the King County Housing Authority, Seattle Housing Authority, and Renton Housing Authority. Voucher holders do not need to wait the typical one year to move out of jurisdiction under portability rules.

Can an EHV be applied to shared housing? (needs specific PHA)

Yes. The unit just needs to meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS). These standards would be applied to the participant's bedroom and/or space they sleep in and ensure that common areas that the prospective participant uses are also up to HQS.

- KCHA - The entire unit has to pass HQS, which includes the common areas and sleeping spaces used by other people living in the unit.
- Seattle Housing Authority EHV can be applied to shared housing as long as the tenants have their own individual lease. Additionally, shared housing is not permitted for studio and one bedroom units.
- Renton Housing Authority EHV can be applied to shared housing as long as the tenants have their own individual lease.

Can an EHV be applied to single-room occupancy (SRO) units?

Yes. The unit just needs to meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

Can an EHV be applied to accessory dwelling units (ADUs)?

Yes. The unit just needs to meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

How many bedrooms is the voucher for?

Each PHA has its own standards for determining the number of bedrooms that a voucher will cover. Factors taken into consideration include the number of people in the household, their relationship, gender and age.

Are there any restrictions on debts owed to a PHA?

No, unlike regular Housing Choice Voucher admissions, Public Housing Authorities may not deny an EHV applicant based on debt owed to a PHA, even if it's currently not in repayment. PHAs may inform applicants about debts owed to them or another PHA, and encourage people to set- up a repayment plan, in order to increase their chances of leasing success but the lack of a repayment agreement will not lead to the loss of the voucher.

Can a person who owns real estate, such as a house, receive an EHV?

Just owning a piece of real estate (land, house, etc.) does not disqualify someone from having an EHV. The real estate is an asset and would be included in their income the same way all assets are. That means that the income earned on the asset would be counted as part of their income. A EHV cannot be used to pay a mortgage, as none of the King County Public Housing Authorities have homeownership programs.